



Evaluation: evaluation policy (2018)

The Executive Board, having considered the draft formal evaluation policy presented by the Secretariat¹ approved the evaluation policy as amended.²

¹ Document EB143/6.

² See Annex.

ANNEX

EVALUATION POLICY (2018)

BACKGROUND

1. As part of the WHO reform process, the Executive Board at its 131st session in May 2012 approved the first WHO evaluation policy.¹ This was followed by the publication of the WHO evaluation practice handbook in 2013.²
2. On 1 August 2014, the evaluation function was moved from the Office of Internal Oversight Services to become a separate unit to support independent evaluation within the Office of the Director-General. As a key first step, a framework for strengthening evaluation and organizational learning in WHO³ was developed and submitted to the Executive Board at its 136th session in 2015.⁴ Together with the evaluation policy (2012), this framework has been instrumental in guiding evaluative work in the Organization during the past few years. In 2017, the Office of the Director-General launched an independent review of the evaluation function at WHO, which documented findings and provided critical recommendations, one of which was the need to revise the 2012 evaluation policy.⁵
3. As part of the organizational shifts envisaged in its Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023,⁶ WHO will “measure impact to be accountable and manage for results”. It further states that the “focus on impact will require a meaningful account of WHO’s contribution on each goal and by each level of the Organization”. The evaluation policy (2018) supports this organizational shift.
4. The external environment in which WHO operates has also considerably evolved in recent years. The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, as well as the transformation in the humanitarian sector following the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, provides new directions for the conduct of evaluation. Thus, in a 2014 resolution, the United Nations General Assembly⁷ reiterated the importance of national evaluation capacities, as did the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system in 2016,⁸ which also underscored the strengthening of joint and system-wide evaluations to support more effectively the

¹ Document EB131/3; see also decision EB131(1) (2012).

² WHO evaluation practice handbook. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2013 (http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/96311/1/9789241548687_eng.pdf?ua=1, accessed 10 April 2018).

³ A framework for strengthening evaluation and organizational learning in WHO. Geneva: World Health Organization (http://www.who.int/about/who_reform/documents/framework-strengthening-evaluation-organizational-learning.pdf?ua=1, accessed 12 April 2018).

⁴ Document EB136/38, noted by the Executive Board at its 136th session (see document EB136/2015/REC/2, summary records of the fourteenth meeting, section 4).

⁵ See the full evaluation report: http://www.who.int/about/evaluation/who_evaluation_funcion_review.pdf?ua=1 (accessed 10 April 2018).

⁶ Document A71/4.

⁷ Resolution 69/237 (2014). Building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level (http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=%20A/RES/69/237%20&Lang=E, accessed 10 April 2018).

⁸ Resolution 71/243 (2017). Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. (<http://undocs.org/A/RES/71/243>, accessed 10 April 2018).

implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Also in 2016, the United Nations Evaluation Group revised its norms and standards.¹

5. Furthermore, the evaluation policy (2018) takes into account the recommendations of the independent review of the evaluation function as well as all relevant internal and external changes and is informed by international best practices in order to frame the Secretariat's evaluation function.

PURPOSE

6. The purpose of this policy is to define the overall framework for evaluation at WHO, to foster the culture and use of evaluation across the Organization, and to facilitate conformity of evaluation at WHO with best practices and with the norms and standards for evaluation of the United Nations Evaluation Group.

7. The accountability framework of WHO includes several types of assessments. WHO considers that all are crucial to programme development and institutional learning. This policy addresses only the assessments qualifying as "Evaluation" and excludes other forms of assessments conducted in WHO, such as monitoring, performance assessment, surveys, and audit.

POLICY STATEMENT

8. Evaluation is an essential function at WHO, carried out at all levels of the Organization. It ensures accountability and oversight for performance and results, and reinforces organizational learning in order to inform policy for decision-makers and support individual learning.

EVALUATION DEFINITION

9. An evaluation is an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders.²

10. In WHO there are two categories of evaluation.

(a) Corporate evaluations are managed, commissioned or conducted by the Evaluation Office, and include programme evaluations, thematic evaluations and office-specific evaluations.

(b) Decentralized evaluations are managed, commissioned or conducted outside the central Evaluation Office, that is, they are initiated by headquarters clusters, regional offices or country

¹ United Nations Evaluation Group's Norms and standards for evaluation, 2016 (<http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>, accessed 10 April 2018).

² United Nations Evaluation Group's Norms and standards for evaluation, 2016: p. 10 (<http://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/2787>, accessed 10 April 2018).

offices and mainly comprise programmatic and thematic evaluations. In this instance, the central Evaluation Office would provide quality assurance and technical backstopping.

PRINCIPLES AND NORMS

11. This policy provides a framework to ensure the systematic application of the key United Nations Evaluation Group evaluation principles to the evaluation function in WHO. These key principles set out below are interrelated and underpin the approach to evaluation in WHO and are applicable to both corporate and decentralized evaluations.

Impartiality¹

12. The key elements of impartiality are objectivity, professional integrity and absence of bias. The requirement for impartiality exists at all stages of the evaluation process, including planning an evaluation, formulating the mandate and scope, selecting the evaluation team, providing access to stakeholders, conducting the evaluation and formulating findings and recommendations.

13. Evaluators need to be impartial, implying that evaluation team members must not have been (or expect to be in the near future) directly responsible for the policy setting, design or management of the evaluation subject.

Independence

14. Independence of evaluation is necessary for credibility, influences the ways in which an evaluation is used and allows evaluators to be impartial and free from undue pressure throughout the evaluation process. The independence of the evaluation function comprises two key aspects – behavioural independence and organizational independence.

(a) **Behavioural independence** entails the ability to evaluate without undue influence by any party. Evaluators must have the full freedom to conduct their evaluative work impartially, without the risk of negative effects on their career development, and must be able to freely express their assessment. The independence of the evaluation function underpins the free access to information that evaluators should have on the evaluation subject.

(b) **Organizational independence** requires that the central evaluation function is positioned independently from management functions, carries the responsibility of setting the evaluation agenda and is provided with adequate resources to conduct its work. Organizational independence also necessitates that evaluation managers have full discretion to directly submit evaluation reports to the appropriate level of decision-making and that they should report directly to an organization's governing body and/or the executive head. Independence is vested in the Evaluation Head to directly commission, produce, publish and disseminate duly quality-assured evaluation reports in the public domain without undue influence by any party.¹

¹ United Nations Evaluation Group's Norms and standards for evaluation, 2016: p. 11 (<http://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/2787>, accessed 10 April 2018).

15. Evaluators shall not be directly responsible for the policy, design, or overall management of the subject under review. WHO staff performing evaluations shall abide by the ethical principles and conduct of staff.¹ External contractors shall abide by the WHO requirements for external contractual agreements. Evaluators must maintain the highest standards of professional and personal integrity during the entire evaluation process. They are expected to ensure that evaluations address gender and equity; and be sensitive to contextual factors, such as the beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environments evaluated.

16. The whistle-blower policy and other relevant policies will protect staff participating in evaluations from retaliation or repercussions.

Utility

17. In commissioning and conducting an evaluation, there should be a clear intention to use the resulting analysis, conclusions or recommendations to inform decisions and actions. The utility of evaluation is manifest through its use in making relevant and timely contributions to organizational learning, informed decision-making processes and accountability for results. Evaluations could also be used to contribute beyond the organization by generating knowledge and empowering stakeholders.²

18. Utility relates to the impact of the evaluation on decision-making and requires that evaluation findings be relevant and useful, presented in a clear and concise way, and monitored for implementation. The utility of an evaluation depends on its timeliness, relevance to the needs of the programme and stakeholders, the credibility of the process and products, and the accessibility of reports.

19. Utility will be ensured through: the systematic prioritizing of the evaluation agenda based on established criteria and consultation with relevant stakeholders; the systematic follow-up of recommendations; public access to the evaluation products; and alignment with the results-based management framework.

Quality

20. Quality relates to the appropriate and accurate use of evaluation criteria, impartial presentation and analysis of evidence, and coherence between findings, conclusions and recommendations.

21. Quality will be ensured through (i) the continuous adherence to WHO evaluation methodology as elaborated in the WHO evaluation practice handbook, the applicable guidelines and the norms and standards for evaluation of the United Nations Evaluation Group; (b) an independent quality assurance mechanism for all decentralized evaluations; and (c) independent quality assessment of corporate and decentralized final evaluation reports. It will cover both the evaluation process and products.

¹ Code of ethics and professional conduct, April 2017. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2017 (http://www.who.int/about/ethics/code_of_ethics_full_version.pdf, accessed 10 April 2018).

² United Nations Evaluation Group's Norms and standards for evaluation, 2016: p. 10 (<http://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/2787>, accessed 10 April 2018).

Transparency

22. Transparency is an essential element of evaluation that establishes trust and builds confidence, enhances stakeholder ownership and increases public accountability. Evaluation products should be publicly accessible.¹

23. To achieve transparency, stakeholders should be aware of the reason for the evaluation, the selection criteria, and the purposes for which the findings will be used. Transparency of process is also important, as is the accessibility of evaluation materials and products.

24. Transparency will be ensured through the approaches described below. The commissioner of the evaluation will ensure a continuous consultation process with relevant stakeholders at all stages of the evaluation process. The evaluation report shall contain details of evaluation methodologies, approaches, sources of information and costs incurred. In accordance with the WHO disclosure policy, evaluation plans, reports, management responses and follow-up reports will be made public on the WHO Evaluation Office website.

Credibility

25. Evaluations must be credible. Credibility is grounded on independence, impartiality and a rigorous methodology. Key elements of credibility include transparent evaluation processes, inclusive approaches involving relevant stakeholders and robust quality assurance systems. Evaluation results (or findings) and recommendations are derived from – or informed by – the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of the best available, objective, reliable and valid data and by accurate quantitative and qualitative analysis of evidence. Credibility requires that evaluations are ethically conducted and managed by evaluators that exhibit professional and cultural competencies.²

Ethics

26. Evaluation must be conducted with the highest standards of integrity and respect for the beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environment; for human rights and gender equality; and for the “do no harm” principle for humanitarian assistance. Evaluators must respect the rights of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence, must ensure that sensitive data is protected and that it cannot be traced to its source and must validate statements made in the report with those who provided the relevant information. Evaluators should obtain informed consent for the use of private information from those who provide it. When evidence of wrongdoing is uncovered, it must be reported discreetly to a competent body (such as the relevant office of audit or investigation).³

Human rights and gender equality

27. The universally recognized values and principles of human rights and gender equality need to be integrated into all stages of an evaluation. It is the responsibility of evaluators and evaluation

¹ United Nations Evaluation Group’s Norms and standards for evaluation, 2016: p. 12 (<http://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/2787>, accessed 10 April 2018).

² United Nations Evaluation Group’s Norms and standards for evaluation, 2016: p. 10–11 (<http://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/2787>, accessed 10 April 2018).

³ United Nations Evaluation Group’s Norms and standards for evaluation, 2016: p. 11–12 (<http://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/2787>, accessed 10 April 2018).

managers to ensure that these values are respected, addressed and promoted, underpinning the commitment to the principle of “no-one left behind”.¹

TYPES OF EVALUATIONS

28. The WHO Secretariat commissions the following main types of evaluations.

(a) **Thematic evaluations** focus on selected topics, such as a new way of working, a cross-cutting theme or core function, or they address an emerging issue of corporate institutional interest. Thematic evaluations provide insight into relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and broader applicability. They require an in-depth analysis of a topic and cut across organizational structures. The scope of these evaluations may range from the entire Organization to a single WHO office.

(b) **Programmatic evaluations** focus on a specific programme. This type of evaluation provides an in-depth understanding of how and why results and outcomes have been achieved over several years and examines their relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, and efficiency. Programmatic evaluations address achievements in relation to WHO’s results chain, and require a systematic analysis of the programme under review. The scope of programmatic evaluations may range from a country to interregional or global levels.

(c) **Office-specific evaluations** focus on the work of the Organization in a country, region or at headquarters in respect of WHO’s objectives and commitments.

29. The Executive Board may, at its discretion, also commission an evaluation of any aspects of WHO.

EXTERNAL AND JOINT EVALUATIONS

30. Evaluations may be commissioned by the governing bodies to be conducted by external evaluators independent from the Secretariat. Other stakeholders, such as Member States, donors or partners, may also commission external evaluations of the work of WHO for the purpose of assessing performance and accountability or prior to placing reliance on the work of the Organization.

31. The Secretariat will fully cooperate in external evaluations through a process of disclosure of appropriate information and facilitation of their performance. The results of external evaluations, when made available, will be disclosed on the WHO Evaluation Office website.

PLANNING AND PRIORITIZATION OF EVALUATIONS

32. WHO will develop a biennial, Organization-wide evaluation workplan as part of the Organization’s planning and budgeting cycle.

33. The workplan shall be established in consultation with senior management at headquarters and regions and with Heads of WHO Offices in countries, areas and territories, based on established criteria. The biennial workplan will be updated annually on the basis of the annual report to the

¹ United Nations Evaluation Group’s Norms and standards for evaluation, 2016: p. 12 (<http://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/2787>, accessed 10 April 2018).

Programme, Budget and Administration Committee and the Executive Board. The workplans shall be submitted to the Executive Board for approval through the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee.

34. The following categories shall be considered in the development of criteria¹ for the selection of topics for evaluation:

- (a) Organizational requirement relevant to: global, international or regional commitments; specific agreements with stakeholders, partners or donors; requests from governing bodies;
- (b) Organizational significance relating to: general programme of work priorities and core functions; level of investment; inherent risks; performance issues or concerns in relation to achievements of expected results;
- (c) Organizational utility relating to: a cross-cutting issue, theme, programme or policy question; potential for staff or institutional learning (innovation); degree of comparative advantage of WHO.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

35. The evaluation methodology and process for both corporate and decentralized evaluations will be informed by the 2016 United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards and is detailed in the WHO evaluation practice handbook (which will be revised following the approval of this policy).

36. The Evaluation Office is also responsible for establishing a framework that provides guidance, quality assurance, technical assistance and professionalization support to the decentralized evaluation function.

RESOURCING OF THE EVALUATION FUNCTION

37. The Director-General shall ensure that there are adequate resources, within the range recommended by the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (JIU/REP/2014/6),² to implement the biennial Organization-wide evaluation workplan which includes not only the evaluations to be conducted but all activities required to ensure the strengthening of the evaluation culture and the professionalization of evaluation conduct across the Organization.

38. Deputy Directors-General, Regional Directors, Assistant Directors-General, Directors and Heads of WHO country offices must ensure that resources are adequate to implement their respective components of the Organization-wide evaluation workplan. An appropriate evaluation budget must be an integral part of the operational workplan of a programme, and shall be discussed as necessary with stakeholders during the planning phase of each project/programme/initiative.

39. In determining the amount required to finance the evaluation function in WHO, factors to be considered include: the Organization's mandate and size; the types of evaluations to be considered; and the role of the evaluation function in institutionalization and support to strengthening decentralized evaluation, national capacities for evaluation and evaluation partnerships. With respect

¹ Refer to the WHO evaluation practice handbook for further guidance on detailed selection criteria.

² Cf. paragraph 39.

to financial benchmarking, the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (JIU/REP/2014/6) concluded that organizations should consider a range of funding that is between 0.5% and 3.0% of organizational expenditure.¹

ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT

40. The accountability framework defines from whom, and to whom, authority flows and for what purpose. It further defines the accountability of those with authority and their responsibility in exercising that authority. This section defines the roles and responsibilities for the main actors in the evaluation process as well as the monitoring mechanism used to implement the evaluation policy.

Roles and responsibilities

41. **The Executive Board of WHO²** shall:

- (a) determine the evaluation policy and subsequent amendments, as needed;
- (b) provide oversight of the evaluation function within the Organization;
- (c) encourage the performance of evaluations as an input to planning and decision-making;
- (d) provide input to the biennial Organization-wide evaluation workplan on the items of specific interest to Member States;
- (e) approve the biennial Organization-wide evaluation workplan, including its budget; consider and take note of the annual report of the implementation of the biennial Organization-wide evaluation workplan;
- (f) periodically revise the evaluation policy, as necessary.

42. **The Evaluation Office is the custodian of the evaluation function** and reports directly to the Director-General, and annually in a report for consideration by the Executive Board, on matters relating to evaluation at WHO. The Office is responsible for the following functions related to evaluation:

- (a) leading the development of a biennial Organization-wide evaluation workplan;
- (b) informing senior management on evaluation-related issues of Organization-wide importance;
- (c) facilitating the input of evaluation findings and lessons learned for programme planning;
- (d) coordinating the implementation of the framework for evaluation across the three levels of the Organization;

¹ United Nations Evaluation Group's Norms and standards for evaluation, 2016: p. 16 (<http://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/2787>, accessed 12 April 2018).

² WHO Executive Board and its subsidiary organ the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee.

- (e) maintaining a system to track management responses to evaluations;
- (f) maintaining an online inventory of evaluations performed across WHO;
- (g) maintaining a roster of experts with evaluation experience;
- (h) providing guidance material and advice for the preparation, conduct and follow-up of evaluations;
- (i) reviewing evaluation reports for compliance with the requirements of the policy;
- (j) strengthening capacities in evaluation among WHO staff (for example, making available standardized methodologies or training on evaluation);
- (k) submitting an annual report on evaluation activities to the Executive Board;
- (l) supporting the periodic review and updates to the policy as needed.

43. The Director-General shall appoint a technically qualified head of the Evaluation Office after consultation with the Executive Board. The Director-General shall likewise consult the Executive Board before any termination of the incumbent of that office. The head of the Evaluation Office serves for a fixed term of four years with a possibility of reappointment only once for a further term of four years, and is barred from re-entry into the Organization after the expiry of his/her term.

44. Additionally, the Director-General, Regional Directors, senior management and programme directors across the Organization also play a critical role in promoting a culture of evaluation. These roles and responsibilities are detailed in the evaluation practice handbook.

USE OF EVALUATION FINDINGS

Utilization and follow-up of recommendations

45. Recommendations contained in evaluation reports reflect the value added by the evaluation process. Each evaluation shall have an identified owner, such as the responsible officer of a cluster, programme, office or project. It is the responsibility of the owner to utilize the findings of the evaluation and develop an action plan for implementing the recommendations.

46. The evaluation owner shall ensure that an appropriate management response is issued in a timely manner to the appropriate Deputy Director-General/Assistant Director-General at headquarters, or to the Regional Director in the regions and countries.

47. The Director-General will establish a mechanism to ensure the effective follow-up of the implementation of evaluation recommendations in a systematic manner, coordinating efforts with the evaluation owners. Annual status reports on progress in the implementation of the recommendations will be submitted to the Executive Board through the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee.

Disclosure and dissemination of evaluation reports

48. WHO shall make evaluation reports available in accordance with the Organization's disclosure policy.

49. Lessons learned from evaluations shall be distilled, reported and disseminated as appropriate.

COMMUNICATION

50. Once approved, the 2018 policy will be rolled out alongside the revised WHO evaluation practice handbook through a communication plan in order to strengthen the evaluation culture across the three levels of the Organization and develop a common understanding of WHO evaluation policy standards, expectations and potential use.

Fourth meeting, 29 May 2018
EB143/SR/4

= = =